

IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-14 (Canceled).

15 (Currently Amended). An apparatus comprising:

a semiconductor substrate having an uncovered upper surface ~~a barrier layer formed thereon;~~
a trench etched into the substrate ~~adjacent the barrier layer;~~
a dielectric filling said layer deposited over the barrier layer and trench, said
dielectric having an upper surface that is planarized with the upper surface of the substrate; and
a plurality of ions implanted into the dielectric layer.

Claims 16 and 17 (Canceled).

18 (Currently Amended). The apparatus of claim 15 ~~14~~ wherein the dielectric ~~layer~~ comprises a silicon oxide layer.

19 (Currently Amended). The apparatus of claim 15 ~~14~~ wherein the dielectric ~~layer~~ is damaged by the plurality of implanted ions.

20 (Currently Amended). The apparatus of claim 15 ~~14~~ wherein the plurality of ions are selected from the group consisting of silicon, carbon, nitrogen, and oxygen.

21 (New). The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the upper surface of said dielectric and the upper surface of said substrate are coplanar.